

PBII - Plastic Soup

Tracklist: *Book Of Changes* [*You Know, My Work Is Done, Life Is In Danger*] (8:33), *In The Arms Of A Gemini* (7:01), *Ladrillo* (2:17), *Loneliness* (8:41), *The Great Pacific Garbage Patch* [*Spit It Out, Plastic Soup, Down Hill From Everywhere, Changing Habits*] (12:48), *Criticize The Critics* (6:07), *It's Your Life* (4:44), *Fata Morgana* (3:56), *Living By The Dice* (8:39), *Cradle To Cradle* (6:20)

Where other bands desperately hang on to an old and well known name, **PBII**, with of course a small hint to the old name, chose a new name even with three original members. Originally starting as Plackband in the seventies but somehow never got to record an album. After more than twenty years they reformed and some of the old material was released in 2000 on the album *The Lost Tapes*. In 2002 they released a new studio album called **After The Battle** and then suddenly things calmed down again. In 2007 Plackband reunited at the after party of the Symforce II Festival, under the new name, PBII. Ronald Brautigam (guitar), Tom van der Meulen (drums) and Michel van Wasseem (keyboards) are still there and they are joined by Harry den Hartog on bass.

And now in 2010 PBII releases a new album called *Plastic Soup*. The change of band name did not result in a complete turn in the music, it is still very neo-progressive rock and though they sound a lot fresher than on *After The Battle*, I can still clearly hear it is the same band. As references you can easily choose **Marillion**, **Genesis**, **IQ** and **Arena** and from the latter two bands a guest musician is playing on this album, respectively John Jowitt and John Mitchell.

The new album *Plastic Soup* is a strong statement to get attention for the environment and the title refers to a garbage patch in the Great Pacific ocean. Part of the booklet is used to get attention for this problem, explaining the aspects of this problem. Even the Dutch Minister of Environment is allowed to share her thoughts and PBII is now working with the Department of Environment on a video to again put the attention on this environmental problem.

I am probably not alone in fearing this was going to be a preachy album about how we should live with the trees and the birds and sure they put a lot of attention on the pollution issue, but on this album it is concentrated in one song, *The Great Pacific Garbage Patch*.

The opener *Book Of Changes* is split into three parts: *You Know* is very neo-progressive and not that far from their music on *After The Battle*. *My Work Is Done* is an instrumental part with many keyboard solos and a very good bass solo, whereas *Life Is In Danger* is more theatrical sounding. *In The Arms Of A Gemini* starts with a groovy guitar riff that reminds me of **Spock's Beard**. The sound is not as complex and more accessible, also very powerful and a heavier side rises to the surface - a highly addictive song. *Ladrillo* is an instrumental piece with the bass in the leading roll. **Pink Floyd**-like with at times the speed of heavy metal speed-bass-player **Joey DeMaio** from Manowar, another great solo spot for the new guy. *Loneliness* is in the same league as *In The Arms Of A Gemini*, the beginning is even more groovy and powerful, sounds like heavy **Knight Area** stuff. The center part is more mellow but this song never classifies as a ballad.

The main topic on this album is pollution and the most preachy song in this album, *The Great Pacific Garbage Patch*, starts with a speech from oceanographer Charles Moore. You will find some world music influenced parts with flutes but the biggest part is progressive rock. A great song about an interesting topic but never too preachy. *Criticize The Critics* is more political orientated, easier constructed and cleverly placed just after the grand epic piece. When I read the title I was afraid that they meant music reviewers, just like RPWL on *This Is Not A Prog Song*, this is not the case, phew. *It's Your Life* is a ballad with female vocals by Heid Jo Hines, another great song and great vocals and on the extra DVD there is a live video of this track, absolutely marvellous.

Fata Morgana is another instrumental track with a lot of bass but this time by IQ's John Jowitt. He plays great but I am still impressed by the bass playing of Harry den Hartog, he is a great addition to the band. *Living By The Dice* is more bluesy and jazzy and less rock influenced. The rhythm is more complex and changing all the time, not an easy groove and requires some more attention. *Cradle To Cradle* is all over the place, slow/fast and mellow/heavy alternate many a time, everybody gets a final solo spot and the lead guitar on this song is by Arena's John Mitchell.

PBII has returned to the progressive rock scene and with one giant step placed them amongst the top bands. A new name with a familiar sound with a fresh twist. The music is still very progressive rock and is not a drastic change from *After The Battle*, they did manage to lift the entire level of their music. The new bass player Harry den Hartog is a good replacement, very good solos and also a lot of groove comes from him. *Plastic Soup* deals with the problem of pollution but never becomes preachy, only *The Great Pacific Garbage Patch* is really focused on that topic.

The album comes with an extra DVD with the album in a 5.1 mix, a live recording of *It's Your Life* and a video of the church organ recording. The guest performances by IQ's John Jowitt and Arena's John Mitchell make this album a bit more interesting but are not necessary to lift the level of this album, PBII is more than capable of doing that themselves. If two such musicians blend in nicely with the rest of the album this can only mean it must be a good album, highly recommended.

Conclusion: 9 out of 10

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